

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON VII.

Feb. 16, 1879. } THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS. { Psalms, i. 1-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”—Pro. iv. 18.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. Ps. cix. 1-8. The undefiled in the way.
- T. Prov. iv. 14-27. The path of the just.
- W. Ps. cix. 33-43. Delight in the law.
- Th. Jer. xvii. 5-14. “Planted by the waters.”
- F. Job xxii. 7-20. “As stubble before the wind.”
- S. Ps. xxxvii. 1-20. The days of the upright.
- S. Ps. i. 1-6. The way of the righteous.

HELPS TO STUDY.

Of the authorship of this Psalm we know nothing absolutely certain. It has been attributed with some probability, to Solomon; and was certainly written before the time of Jeremiah, who refers to it—Jer. xvii. 5-8. The way of the righteous is described in contrast with the way of the ungodly.

I. THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.—Verses 1-3.

As the psalmist contemplates the character and reward of the godly, he exclaims in admiration and joy, Blessed, literally, “Oh, the blessedness!” Jesus has unfolded this beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount. In both places the blessedness is set forth as resting upon character. The righteous is first described negatively. The way he does not go in, is pointed out. Note the gradation in this description; it is threefold. We have, first, three degrees of habit—walketh, standeth, sitteth: then three degrees of evil in the character—the ungodly, the word literally expresses the unrest, disquietude of an evil disposition—Isai. lvi. 20; sinners, workers of iniquity; scorners, who openly avow and teach evil, while they despise and revile what is good; lastly, three degrees of the manifestation of evil—the counsel, the secret purpose of the heart; the way, the daily life and conversation; the seat, which is equivalent here to the social assembly, where they meet to talk folly and plan wickedness. Thus men living in sin go from bad to worse. Resist the beginnings of evil.

The righteous man avoids evil, because he loves good. Mere negative goodness is of little worth, indeed is impossible. It was an old saying, that “nature abhors a vacuum.” Leave the heart and life empty, and evil will fill them. To expel evil desires and affections, you must implant holy and righteous ones. Mere prohibition of evil is not enough. There must be the constraint and attraction of goodness revealed to the heart to draw it. Hence the blessed man is not one merely restrained by prohibitions from evil, but he is one whose delight is in the law of the Lord. He serves not by constraint, but willingly. He is not compelled by duty, but led by desire and delight. He is not like Ulysses chained to the mast, while still longing for the pleasures of the Sirens. Ps. cxix. 47; Rom. vii. 22. Upon this law he meditates; he marks, leans and inwardly digests. It thus becomes the food and nourishment of the life. In it is his study by day; of it is his reverie by night. The psalmist thus points out in verse 2 the source of the good man’s life and strength, the directory by which he walks, the staff by which he is sustained, the hidden sources whence his vigour and happiness proceed, God’s will revealed in His law and word. We must meditate upon something; let it be good. Phil. iv. 8. In the thoughts of the heart, words and acts take their beginning. We are commanded therefore, “Keep thy heart above all keeping.” Prov. iv. 23. How? “Let thine heart retain my words. Get wisdom, she shall keep thee.” Prov. iv. 46.

A vivid and beautiful comparison. Like a tree,—illustrates the life, growth, beauty, usefulness and permanency of righteous character. No tree is named here, but elsewhere the righteous is compared to the three which were the glory of Palestine. “The righteous shall flourish like the palm.” Psalm xcii. 12. It is noble and beautiful. Song of Sol. vii. 6, 7. It is evergreen, grows on steadily from century to century. It is never moved from its uprightness; the wind cannot sway it, nor heavy weights bend it. It grows in deserts, but must be fed by springs. It bears its best fruit in old age. Ps. xcii. 14. It is most useful, indispensable in the countries in which it grows.

“He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon; beauty, fragrance, permanence. A perennial growth.

“His beauty shall be as the olive.” Hos. xiv. 6. All three set forth the two points insisted on in our lesson. (1.) The source of the Christian’s life; rivers of water, the perennial streams, the fountains of living water. John vii. 37-39; Isa. lv. 1; Jer. ii. 13. Hence his leaf withers not, his strength and freshness do not fail, because there is in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (2.) The result and purpose of the Christian’s life—fruit, Gal. v. 22. Fruit is the result of life. In Christ is our life, therefore first come to Him. The husbandman looks for fruit. Is. v. 2. The barren, useless tree will be destroyed. Luke xiii. 9. Whatsoever the righteous man doeth shall prosper. He may meet with many misfortunes and temptations; but though all appear to be against him (Gen. xiii. 36), they are truly and ultimately for him. Rom. viii. 28. The only true basis of enduring prosperity is righteousness. All other is a delusion.

II. THE WAY OF THE UNGODLY.—Vers. 4-6.

Their character and condition is the reverse of that of the righteous. Their character is confirmed to evil; their delight is not in God’s law, but in self-will, and worldly, and sinful pleasures. Their meditation is not upon good, but their thoughts are occupied with evil desires and purposes. They cannot be compared to the tree, but to the chaff—light and frivolous, soon to be separated from the wheat—useless, unfit to be driven before the wind or consumed in the fire. Job. xvi. 18; Ps. xxxv. 5; Prov. xiv. 32; Mat. iii. 12. When the day of Judgment and separation cometh, the ungodly shall not stand; guilty, self-condemned, they shall be speechless. They shall no longer abide in the congregation of the righteous, but like the tares, shall be taken away from the wheat. Matt. xiii. “The chaff, while united with the wheat, enjoys some privileges for the wheat’s sake, but divided off from it, it is cast out for the fire.” Even the way of the ungodly shall perish. Utter ruin, hopeless desolation, shall overtake them, and not a wrack shall be left behind. Prov. xiv. 12, 32. In happy contrast is the way of the righteous, which the Lord knoweth. He knoweth them that are His, them that trust in Him. 2 Tim. ii. 12; Neh. i. 7. It will recall us when we wander, lift us when we stumble, encourage and comfort us when we walk in darkness and have no light, to remember “He knoweth the way that I take.” Job. xxiii. 10.

ACTIVITY NOT ENERGY.

There are some men whose failure to succeed in life is a problem to others, as well as to themselves. They are industrious, prudent and economical; yet, after a long life of striving, old age finds them still poor. They complain of ill luck. They say that fate is always against them. But the fact is that they miscarry, because they have mistaken mere activity for energy. Confounding two things essentially different, they have supposed that, if they were always busy, they would be certain to be advancing their fortunes. They have forgotten that misdirected labour is but waste of activity. The person who would succeed is like a marksman firing at a target; if his shots miss the mark, they are a waste of powder. So in the great game of life, what a man does must be made to count, or might almost as well have been left undone. Everybody knows some one in his circle of friends who, though always active, has this want of energy. The distemper, if we may call it such, exhibits itself in various ways. In some cases the man has merely an executive capacity, when he should have a directive one. In other words he makes a capital clerk of himself when he ought to do the thinking of the business. In other cases what is done is not done either at the right time or in the right way. Energy, correctly understood, is activity proportioned to the end.

THE WIFE’S SECRET.

“I will tell you the secret of our happy married life,” said a gentleman of threescore and ten. “We have been married forty years; my bride was the belle of New York when I married her, and though I loved her for herself, still, a beautiful flower is all the lovelier posed in an exquisite vase. My wife knew this, and true to her genuine refinement has never, in all these forty years, appeared at the table or allowed me to see her less carefully dressed than during the days of our honeymoon. Some might call this foolish vanity; I call it real womanliness. I presume I should not have ceased to love her had she followed the example of many others, and considering the every-day life of home necessarily devoid of beauty, allowed herself to be careless of such small matters as dressing for her husband’s eye; but love is increased when we are proud of the object loved, and to-day I am more proud of my beautiful wife with her silver hair and gentle face than of the bride whose loveliness was the theme of every tongue. Any young lady can win a lover; how few can keep them such after years of married life.”

In all the little courtesies of life; in all that makes one attractive and charming, in thoughtfulness of others and forgetfulness of self, every home should be begun and continued. Men should be more careful to sympathize and protect the wife than the bride—more willing to pick up her scissors, hand her the paper, or carry her packages than if she were a young lady; and as no lady would for a moment think of controlling the movements and engagements of a young gentleman, neither should she do so when he is her husband. If by making herself bright and attractive she fails to hold him, compulsion will only drive him farther from her. I do not believe it possible to retain the friendship of any one by demanding it. I do not believe it possible to lose it by being loveable.—Alliance.

BOTH the Kirk and Free Church of Scotland have sent clergymen to Cyprus to establish missions or churches.

THERE is a falling off of \$20,000 in receipts of the Free Church Sustentation Fund during the past seven months.

THERE is a religious sect in Russia called “Helpers,” concerning whom the spies of the Government testified that “they never drank, swore, lied, or got in debt.”

ACCORDING to the Religious Herald there are now 160,000 Baptist members in North Carolina, being one-seventh of the population. The number of white and coloured church members are nearly equal. Over 9,000 were added to the coloured churches last year.

Cleanings.

“THE Lord loveth a cheerful giver;” but there’s no use chucking a copper cent into the contribution box loud enough to make the folks on the back seat thin, the communion service has tumbled off the altar.”—Argonaut.

I HAVE never been able to discover that a man is at all the worse for being attacked. One foolish line of his own does him more harm than the ablest pamphlets against him by other people.—Macaulay.

HE that knows how to pray has the secret of support in trouble, and of relief from anxiety; the power of soothing in every care, and filling the soul with entire trust and confidence for the future.—William Jay.

CHRISTIAN faith is a grand cathedral with divinely pictured windows. Standing without, you see no glory nor can possibly imagine any; standing within, every ray of light reveals a harmony of unspeakable splendor.

CHEMISTS tells us that a single grain of the substance called iodine will impart color to several thousand times its weight of water. It is so in higher things—one companion, one book, one habit, may affect the whole of life and character.

WHAT a marvellous salvation is this! Christ takes a worm of the dust and transforms it into an angel; a black and deformed thing, and makes it matchless in glory, peerless in beauty, and fit to be the companion of seraphs! Oh, my soul, stand and admire this blessed truth of salvation by Christ.—Spurgeon.

A SKEPTICAL young collegian confronted an old Quaker with a statement that he did not believe in the Bible. Said the Quaker, “Does thee believe in France?” “Yes; for though I have not seen it, I have seen others that have. Besides, there is plenty of corroborative proof that such a country does exist.” “Then thee will not believe anything thee or others have not seen?” “No, to be sure I won’t.” “Did thee ever see thine own brains?” “No.” “Ever see anybody that did?” “No.” “Does thee believe thee has any?”

AS the tremulous needle, however easily it may be affected by foreign influences, never ceases to vibrate till it finds rest in the centre of attraction, so the sensitive soul of the Christian, too easily disturbed by external forces, finds no rest but in God. If for a moment the enemy is permitted to harass with accusations of guilt, in Him it finds pardon and peace. In weakness it turns to Him for strength; in darkness, for light; in trials, for direction. Under all circumstances, it never fails to find in God an all-sufficient and sustaining portion.

IT should be pointed out with continual earnestness that the essence of lying is in deception, not in words; a lie may be told by silence, by equivocation, by the accent on a syllable, by a glance of the eye attaching a peculiar significance to a sentence; and all these kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded; so that no form of blinded conscience is so far sunk as that which comforts itself for having deceived, because the deception was by gesture or silence instead of utterance, and finally, according to Tennyson’s trenchant line, “A lie which is half a truth is ever the worst of lies.”—Ruskin.

WHATEVER you try to do in life, try with all your heart to do it well; whatever you devote yourself to, devote yourself to it completely. In great aims and small, be thoroughly in earnest. Never believe it possible that any natural or improved ability can claim immunity from the companionship of the steady, plain, hard-working qualities, and hope to gain its end. There is no such thing as fulfilment on this earth. Some happy talent and some fortunate opportunity may form the two happy sides of the ladder on which some men mount, but the rungs of that ladder must be made of material to stand wear and tear; and there is no substitute for thorough-going ardent, sincere earnestness. Never put the hand to anything on which you cannot throw your whole self; never affect depreciation of your work, whatever it is. These you will find golden rules.—Waverly Magazine.

WHAT is sin in its nature? Sin is the violation of God’s law, and yet to our blinded eyes sin still remains unseen. Would that we could describe sin, but we cannot. Our own vision is too dim to see more than barely its outlines, and our pen too feeble to portray it. Decency and shame are unknown to it. It unblushingly defies and insults the infinite One. It remorselessly treads in the mire man made in the image of God. There is not a virtue it does not despoil, nor a blessing it does not despise. It enters our dwellings and smites with moral leprosy the holiest things. It impregnates with its virus the little child, and sends the youth abroad to work ruin wherever he goes. There is nothing so sacred in heaven that it will not menace it, nor is there anything on earth so pure and beautiful as to find protection against its assaults and insults. Who can number the groans it has extorted from man, or the tears it has made to flow? It has made earth to travail with pain, and to bring forth sorrow. Evil only has sin produced. But so insinuating is sin, and so open to its approaches is our fallen nature, that though man’s spirit may be quickened by a touch of the Divine, yet tabernacling in the flesh, he is intoxicated and defiled by it.—The Sabbath Recorder.

Births, Marriages and Deaths.

DIED.

At Stanfold, Que., on the 19th inst. Eliza Layfield, wife of A. D. Campbell, aged 48 years.